

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 ACDA-12 HA-05
MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00
SSM-03 OMB-01 /116 W
-----125864 242356Z /70

R 242325Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7167
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 09294

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG IS XF US
SUBJECT: REACTION OF EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS TO BEGIN VISIT
- TO U.S.

REF: CAIRO 9214

SUMMARY. SENIOR AND MIDDLE-LEVEL OFFICIALS COUNT BEGIN
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OUT AS PEACEMAKER, ARE RELIEVED THAT CARTER STUCK TO U.S.
POSITIONS, PLEASED WITH U.S.-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION,
SKEPTICAL THAT U.S. IS DOING ITS BEST TO INFLUENCE
ISRAEL AND RESIGNED ABOUT EGYPTIAN INABILITY TO IN-
FLUENCE EVENTS. ALL ASK WHAT IS U.S. GOING TO DO NOW?
HIGHEST LEVEL OFFICIALS BELIEVE PROGRESS MUST BE MADE
BEFORE OCTOBER TO AVERT DANGER OF SEVERE DISTURBANCES

AGAINST SADAT GOVERNMENT. LEFTISTS AND MOST INTELLECTUALS, AS OPPOSED TO OFFICIALS, ALREADY CONSIDER PEACE INITIATIVE DEAD. END SUMMARY.

1. DISCUSSIONS EVENING OF MARCH 23 THAT AMBASSADOR AND EMBASSY HAD WITH SENIOR AND MIDDLE-LEVEL GOV OFFICIALS REVEAL REMARKABLY SIMILAR REACTION TO BEGIN-CARTER TALKS. FOLLOWING ARE PRINCIPAL THEMES THAT EMERGED:

(A) BEGIN IS HOPELESS. THERE IS VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS OPINION THAT BECAUSE OF HIS BACKGROUND, IDEOLOGY AND DOGMATISM, BEGIN IS INCAPABLE OF CHANGING OR SEIZING PRESENT OPPORTUNITY. MINWAR GAMASY WAS PARTICULARLY EMPHATIC ON THIS POINT.

(B) RELIEF THAT CARTER DID NOT RETREAT FROM PREVIOUSLY STATED POSITIONS ON KEY ISSUES.

(C) SATISFACTION THAT PUBLIC CONFRONTATION TAKING PLACE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND U.S.

(D) SKEPTICISM THAT U.S. IS DOING ITS BEST TO INFLUENCE ISRAEL. MOST EGYPTIANS CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE ISRAEL DEPENDS ON THE U.S. FOR ARMS, MONEY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, IT MUST DANCE TO U.S. TUNE IF WE DEMAND IT. AND
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(E) RESIGNATION THAT EGYPT HAS LITTLE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS AT THIS TIME DESPITE ITS ENORMOUS STAKE IN THEIR COURSE.

2. U.S. ROLE. ALMOST ALL ASKED WHAT U.S. WILL DO NOW? TWO OFFICIALS REMARKED THAT IF ONLY U.S. REACTION IS RESUMPTION OF AHERN SHUTTLE, IT WOULD BE "TOTALLY INADEQUATE". THEIR REASONING WAS THAT IF PRESIDENT CARTER COULD NOT BRING ABOUT CHANGE IN ISRAELI NEGOTIATING POSITIONS, HOW COULD AHERN HOPE TO DO SO. CLEARLY, THEY HOPE TO SEE U.S. MUSCLE APPLIED THROUGH SHOWDOWN OR CUTOFF CERTAIN KINDS OF AID OR SIMILAR MEASURES. THEY DO NOT WANT TO SEE BEGIN GOVERNMENT REWARDED WITH ADDITIONAL ARMS OR AID.

3. COUNTDOWN FOR EGYPT? PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY SPEAKER SAYYID MARI TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT ISRAELIS DON'T APPEAR TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS A TIME LIMIT WITHIN WHICH EGYPT MUST HAVE REAL PROGRESS. AT FIRST HE MENTIONED JUNE OR JULY, BUT WHEN AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT SADAT HAD REFERRED TO OCTOBER EXPIRATION OF UNEF MANDATE

AS CRUCIAL TIME, MAR'I AGREED THAT SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER WAS OUTSIDE LIMIT. HE SAID THERE WAS ALREADY MOVEMENT UNDERWAY AMONG LEFTISTS ON CAMPUSES AND IN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY TO DISCREDIT SADAT ON GROUNDS THAT PEACE INITIATIVE HAD FAILED AND LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE ECONOMY. BY TIME UNIVERSITIES RECONVENED NEXT SEPTEMBER, MAR'I THOUGHT DEMONSTRATIONS BY STUDENTS, WHO REFLECT OPINION OF WIDE SEGMENT OF POPULATION, WERE DISTINCT POSSIBILITY. HE RECALLED JANUARY 1977 RIOTS AND THOUGHT IF DISTURBANCES DO TAKE PLACE DURING THIS YEAR, THEY COULD TURN EQUALLY NASTY. MINISTER OF INTERIOR

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NABAWI TOOK MUCH THE SAME LINE WITH AMBASSADOR REGARDING POSSIBILITY OF CIVIL DISTURBANCES THIS YEAR IF SADAT'S POLICIES DO NOT START PAYING OFF.

4. COMMENT: WE WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT ABOVE REACTION IS THAT OF ESSENTIALLY PRO-SADAT, PRO-U.S. OFFICIALS. LEFT-ISTS, NASSERISTS, AND MOST INTELLECTUALS TAKE GLOOMIER VIEW THAT PEACE INITIATIVE HAS ALREADY FAILED. EILTS

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